

Failure and Reform of the State in Sub-Saharan Africa : Suppressing or Consolidating the State?

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Introduction

Patrimonialism¹ as a mode of political regulation, is both functional and dysfunctional. There is a basic contradiction between the survival of the political class and the institutionalization of the state. Just as there is also a contradiction between consolidation of the political class and the lack of institutionalization of the state. There is another contradiction between patrimonialism and development, that is to say between

political rationality and economic rationality²: on the one hand, there is political and social investment and on the other hand, economic investment. Without any kind of political order,

¹ Which is the confusion between public or private, or the non respect of the distinction between public and private. See Max Weber, *Economy and society*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich(eds), University of California Press, 1978, tome 1, pp.226-241; tome 2, pp.212-217, pp.226-240, pp.255-265. On neo-patrimonialism, see Samuel Eisenstadt, *Traditional patrimonialism and modern neo-patrimonialism*, Sage Research Papers, Beverly Hills and London, Sage Publications inc., 1973. On the adaptation of the concept of neo-patrimonialism to the African contemporary political context, see J-F Médard, *L'Etat néo-patrimonial*, in Médard J-F, (dir.), *Etats d'Afrique Noire*, pp.323-253, Paris, Karthala, 1991. See also J-F Médard, *Patrimonialism, Patrimonialization, Neo-Patrimonialism and the Study of the the Post-colonial state in Subsaharian Africa*, printed in this volume.

² See J-F Médard, *L'Etat patrimonialisé*, *Politique Africaine*, 39, septembre 1990, pp.25-36; J. Coussy, *Economie et politiques du développement*, in D. Martin et C. Coulon, *Les Afriques politiques*, Paris, La découverte, 1991.

even based on patrimonialism, there is no possibility of economic growth, and of development. In some countries, labelled as "useful Africa" ("Afrique utile") by A. Mbembe, Kenya, Ivory Coast, etc..., the neo-patrimonial "mix" provided the conditions, if not for development, at least for growth. It also provided some political stability, based on a sort of implicit contract: we accept your domination provided you secure for us a minimum of economic benefits, or at least the hope of getting some. This worked roughly for twenty years in some countries.

The failure of development, of the states, and of the political regimes were, in large part, all rooted in the failure of political institutionalization. When it became evident that we were facing a global failure, some people started to think that it would be fortunate for Africa. Instead of importing foreign models of development and political organization, Africa would be able, to create and invent its own native institutions, rooted in African culture. Development would come from the informalization of the economy and the disappearance of the state. Thanks to the vitality of African societies, in strong contrast to the decomposition of the state, as in Zaïre, Africa was going to find its way out of a situation which looked desperate. This was forgetting that these failures were also the failures of the hopes and expectations of the African population. The myth of development was shared by the large majority of the population. It was ambiguous, in the sense that development was confused with one of its by-products, material well-being. This kind of reaction seems to me largely sentimental, romantic and utopian. It supposes that the African population would forget about the quest for welfare. It supposes that the African continent could isolate itself from the rest of the world which is unrealistic. The real problem is elsewhere. At the age of accelerating globalization, it concerns the planet itself, and not only Africa. Can development, as a cumulative process of capital accumulation, rooted in scientific and technological progress, be both universalized and sustainable? This kind of question is not raised by the presently dominant school of thought, which is based on neo-classical economy and generalized utilitarianism. Adding "sustainable" to development in order to take into account the ecological limits of growth is not enough : it does not solve the contradictions between the postulates of development based on the neo-classical model and the problem of ecological, social and political survival. Development based on neo-

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classical economics and uncontrolled technological progress is not ecologically, socially and politically sustainable.

This does not mean that all the economic, administrative and political reforms which were promoted were bad in themselves. They were, at least on paper, the right answers to the real problems. But they were implemented in a dogmatic way, paying little attention to African realities. The risk was to kill the sick man instead of the disease. In addition the economic and administrative reforms have been undermining the political reforms. What we observe at present, is an overall failure of reform in most African countries. Instead of consolidating the state and the economy, instead of strengthening the institutions, we notice the marginalization of the African economy, a deepening crisis of the state, the semi-failure of democratization. Even though there has been some progress in southern Africa, permanent social, economical and political chaos is threatening to spread in larger areas of the continent. The problem is no longer development, but economic, social and political survival. The main questions are : how to limit the extension of chaos, how to restore political order, how to democratize the state and society? I cannot study the role of the state without starting from these questions. In addition, I cannot analyse what role the state should play in an abstract and quasi utopian manner. This is why I will approach the topic through the paradox of the failure of good reforms which seemed to be the right answers to the real problems.

Reform as the Answer to the Failure of the State

From a purely economic point of view, there is no way to avoid the basic rule, that you cannot consume indefinitely more than you produce, you cannot live above your means for too long, or you go into debt and have trouble. In other words, "you cannot eat your cake and have it, too". A government cannot escape such matters as the deficit of external balance, or the deficit of public expenses. Development can neither be based on conspicuous consumption nor on a general waste of resources, as has been the case in Africa for so long. There are no economic miracles. At one point, you are obliged to pass from the "principle of pleasure" to the "principle of reality". Economic austerity, structural

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adjustment, and devaluation in francophone Africa, were not the causes, but the ineluctable consequences and sanctions of the previous general failure of the state and of development. Their disastrous social effects cannot be considered independently of the generalized mismanagement which brought them on. The question was not just the choice of a bad economic policy, which resulted in an urban bias and sacrificed agricultural production. R. Bates rightly pointed out the political rationality of the bad economic choices, but forgot about the specific nature of the African state³.

The failure of development is directly, if not exclusively, connected to the patrimonialization of the state. In addition, the failure of the state is also the failure of its political regime. For the sake of development and national unity, dictatorship, in the form of the one party system or military rule, had been imposed on the continent. The failure of development has also been the failure of authoritarian regimes. This is why both depatrimonialization and democratization of the state seemed to be the right answers to the problem.

Depatrimonializing the state

Max Weber, long ago, pointed out the contradictions between patrimonialism and capitalism. This is very well illustrated with the present case of Africa, if not of Asia. Even if it may be considered that the extent of patrimonialism in Africa is related to the underdevelopment of the continent, everybody agrees that development is inconceivable with such an extent of corruption, unless we consider that the spreading criminalization of the economy is to become the African mode of development, or at least a form of primitive accumulation, a kind of pre-condition to development. What is surprising is that it took such a long time, more than twenty years, to realize, with the Berg Report, that development was impossible with such a patrimonialized state. How was it possible to think for so long a period that such a state could be responsible for development? Then followed the "good governance" movement which has inspired most of the reform. This idea of "good governance" is for me equivalent to the idea of depatrimonializing the state.

³ Robert H. Bates, *Essays on the Political Economy of Rural Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 1983; *Markets and States in Tropical Africa*, University of California Press, 1981.

The monopoly of the state in relation to development had to be dismantled first, not only to make space for the private sector, but also because the public sector was so inefficient because of patrimonialism. The privatization of the numerous mismanaged parastatals was the right thing to do, not in the name of neo-classical economic principles and of the idea that the state as such is rent seeking by essence, but because a patrimonialized state is only based on rent seeking. The African state had become both over- and under-developed. In the name of development, the administration had become the "first industry in Africa", to quote René Dumont⁴. But behind this multiplication of bureaucratic organizations and parastatals, there was mostly the distribution of prebends and predation, which is the opposite of development. Because of the pressure of patrimonialism, privatization was effectively a priority. Reducing the state was the answer to the over-developed state and a precondition to its consolidation. Privatization was not supposed to mean the weakening of the state, but on the contrary, its strengthening. Thus followed the necessary privatization of many inefficient and mismanaged parastatals, the diminution of the salaries of the civil servants as in Cameroon, the reduction of their privileges, and the less successful attempts to diminish their number. Reforming the management of the administration was possible only if the weight and the role of the administration had previously been reduced. This was not only the way to give some breathing space to the "civil" society, but a way to concentrate on improving the functioning of what should be the core of the state.

The idea of decentralization was also the right answer to an over centralized and "jacobin" type of state where everything was decided from the capital city, on the basis of political patronage or ethno-regional favoritism, and imposed at the local level in an authoritarian way. It was a necessary complement to privatization. Encouraging local initiatives and NGOs, was also going in the proper direction. Soon it appeared that all these reforms were only possible if, in addition to administrative reform, there was political reform. The idea of administrative accountability could not be implemented without political accountability, that is without democracy. There was

⁴ René Dumont, *L'Afrique noire est mal partie*, Paris, 1962.

no breathing space for "civil" society, for local government or NGO's without democratization.

Democratizing the state

The dominant thought until recently was that there could not be any democracy without development. In a very short time, the formula has been reversed to "no development without democracy". This, however, is forgetting that Asian dragons are not democracies. This is why it would be preferable to disconnect the questions of development and of democracy, instead of subordinating the issue of democracy to the issue of development, and in promoting democracy only as a tool for development. Democracy deserves to be pursued for its own sake and not only for the sake of development. It is the only means which has been invented for limiting political evils.

The democratic movement in Africa was intellectually and ideologically maturing during the eighties. It crystallized with the fall of the Berlin wall and subsequent events in the Eastern countries, but it would never have been possible without a high level of internal political mobilization. With the fall of African commodity prices, the marginalization of the economies, the growth of the international and internal debts, the sharp decline of incomes, the spreading of unemployment etc..., the mismanagement of African economies became patent, unbearable and resulted in the delegitimization of incumbent dictators and autho-ritarianism. The state was disintegrating, and its financial crisis could no longer permit the distribution of prebends and patronage as a means of political control. All that was left was coercion. Democracy appeared as the answer. The democratic movement was born out of this situation. But there is a long way to go from the delegitimization of authoritarianism to the institutionalization of democracy. Encouraged by the confusion between democracy and development and between development and welfare, people thought that democracy was the panacea, that it was the answer to all their problems, including poverty and underdevelopment. This could only lead to disappointment about democracy. It is fair to add that there was also among the new generation of young educated people a deep and increasing frustration with the way the economy and the state were managed, combined with an aspiration toward more justice and freedom. Democratic mobilizations cannot be interpreted only as a means to get more economic welfare, or

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what has been called the "democratic rent". In this sense democratization and depatrimonialization were connected. Systematic favoritism was working both against the efficiency of the state and against democracy. Two criticisms which have been formulated against the democratization of African political regimes seem to me completely irrelevant.

The first criticism is the populist one : it disregards the democratization of the state as long as there is no democratization of the society itself and of social relations in the villages as well as in the cities. It is true that to become effective, democracy has to be developed at the grass roots level. This can be done through decentralization. It is not, however, because you do not have everything at once at both national and local level that you should be deprived of it all together. The democratization and the liberalization of the state are a beginning and, if successful, it can even move toward the democratization of society. The Indian experience of democracy, inspite of its pitfalls, is significant. Formal democracy is not enough, and does not exhaust, far from it, the democratic idea which can never be exhausted, but we are still waiting for the empirical demonstration that there can be democracy without it.

Another common criticism is the culturalist criticism based on cultural relativism. Importing democracy in Africa is criticized because it is supposedly western democracy and it is imposed on Africa by the West⁵. What is then needed is African democracy and not Western democracy. But it is not true to say that democracy has been imposed by Western countries. At best it has recently been encouraged more or less willingly by some of them through democratic conditionality⁶. In some cases as Malawi, this pressure succeeded in forcing the dictator out of power. In the case of Kenya it forced Arap Moi to accept multipartism, but

⁵ J-F Médard, Développement, autoritarisme et démocratie, Colloque de Libreville.

⁶ On political conditionality see Alice Sindzingre, Conditionnalités politiques, gouvernementalités et dispositif de gouvernement en Afrique et John Wiseman, Démocratisation, réformes économiques et conditionnalité en Afrique sub-saharienne: contradictions et convergences, in Sophia Mappa (dir.), Développer par la démocratie ?, Paris, Karthala, 1995. In the case of French policy toward African democratization, the idea of political conditionality (or democratic rent), which François Mitterand introduced in his speech of La Baule, has not been put into practice.

it could not transform him into a democratic leader. In reality, it is the reverse which is true : for thirty years dictatorship had been imposed on Africans with the help and the support of western democracies and communist countries. It is surprising how this support of dictatorship by Western democracies seemed normal, and that it is when the democracies tended to support democracy, that it looked shocking to some. It is true that democracy has to be Africanized in the sense that it should be reappropriated by Africans themselves in order to root itself in African cultures and become part of it. But that does not mean that so called traditional culture is the answer. That means that when some unorthodox experiments in democracy are tried, as the Resistance councils in Uganda, there should be some kind of flexibility from the west, to give it time to develop its potentialities. This is what happened until recently. Most of the time, when one speaks about African democracy, it is usually to evade democracy itself : to legitimize the violation of human rights, as if these violations were acceptable because they are supposed to be part of African culture and democracy. This is the language that African dictators use to fight democracy when they denounce it as a "foreign ideology" (Arap Moi in Kenya and many others). There is a minimum of rules in the democratic game without which speaking of democracy is just a joke. It is not because these rules have emerged from the history of the Western world, that they are European by nature. This kind of reasoning is an insult to the African democrats who rightly feel abused by this way of thinking : democracy is too bad (or too good) for them.

The problem, then, is not that depatrimonialization and democratization of the state were the wrong things to do, but that things did not turn out exactly as was expected.

The Relative Failure of Reform and the Deepening Crisis of the State

On the whole, we can speak of an overall failure of reforms. The main problem was that you cannot change reality by fiat and decree. As the history of Western states shows, depatrimonialization and democratization are long term processes, and once more or less attained, they are not established forever. What has been observed, is the entrenched

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resistance of patrimonialism and authoritarianism, the extraordinary ability of African leaders to resist, avoid and subvert reforms, the restoration of authoritarianism and, at the same time the unintended effects of these reforms.

The failure of structural adjustment reforms

For the first time in a long period, the latest news about African economic conjuncture in a few countries at least, suggests a stabilization of the economic decline. This still needs to be confirmed, and as we know, if growth does come back in some African countries, it will not necessarily mean development.

If we take a look at privatization, when it has proceeded successfully to its term, it has often resulted in the taking over of the parastatals by foreign companies. The example of Bouygues taking over the electricity in Ivory Coast, without any sort of tendering is typical. Even if the Bouygues company is more efficient than the former one, of which I am not certain, this cannot be considered as a big success. When the parastatals have been acquired by nationals, it is like in Eastern Europe, to the profit of former members of the nomenklatura, the only ones who had access to the necessary resources, money and connections for acquisition. It is doubtful whether these people will be able to become authentic capitalist entrepreneurs.

As for the NGOs as a tool for development, it seems that in many cases, they have been set up by civil servants or former civil servants, as a means to extract foreign money which is no longer available through the state. Too often, they look more like new tools to extract resources from abroad than the expression of the birth of civil society. But this should be further explored by research, since many observers underline, on the other hand, the extraordinary vitality of African society which expresses itself, among other things by the burgeoning of groups of many kinds, often religious, but also development of civic groups, particularly active among women. When Houphouët-Boigny tried to reform the administration, he named a brilliant and efficient technocrat at the head of the Ministry of Reform. The result of that exercise was that the only ministry he was able to

reform was the Ministry of Reform⁷. As long as he was backed by the head of state, he could proceed, but soon, he lost his support because he was threatening the positions of the "barons". Reforms cannot go against the vital and immediate interests of the top leaders.

As to decentralization, we wonder what decentralization really means if the local government does not control any resources of its own. This is only a way for the central government to transfer its responsibilities. In addition, local government leaders do not always behave democratically and in favor of their fellow citizens. The Maasai leader Ntimama is thus helping to dispossess the Maasai of their land for the benefit of the Kenyan political class. However, without the support of the state, the local society is obliged to take care of itself, and that could be the beginning of a profound change of behavior. On this topic also we need more research to make an assessment.

Whether it is done under the pressure of the World Bank or not, diminishing the number of civil servants and their privileges and incomes looks like both justice and an economic necessity. But part of this money was redistributed through kinship or ethnic channels which means that the civil servants have not been the only victims, but the whole population has suffered. In addition, when the salaries have been drastically decreased as in Cameroon, where they were first cut 20%, then 50%, the result was the complete disruption of the administration. The case of the University of Cameroon is an example : it was already extremely inefficient, it has now become even worse. Corruption which was already very high, went even higher, as if worse was always possible. Before, the priority was to get rich, nowadays, with the exception of the top leaders who have not changed their behavior, it is merely to survive. The salaries of the police and the military were also lowered, but to a much lesser extent, and they have the privilege of direct extortion. Under the injunction of the World Bank, the already very limited welfare benefits related to health and education have been suppressed. We realize now that, although education and health were very badly managed, it was better than nothing. Now, children don't go to school any more, and sick people go

⁷ N'Goran, La réforme de l'administration publique en Côte d'Ivoire, thèse d'études africaines, CEAN-IEP de Bordeaux, Université de Bordeaux I.

back to traditional medicine instead of going to the hospitals are now frequently lack medicine. Meanwhile, the rate of predation among the higher brackets of the political class intensifies, and the newcomers who sometimes are also old timers, are not the last to join in the feast as in Zambia or Malawi. On the whole, there is a widespread impoverishment of the population, with only the top leaders of the state who continue to prosper, despite of all the pressure.

The relative failure of democratization

It is difficult in such a short space to make a precise assessment of the transitions to multipartism⁸. Many so called multipartist regimes which came out of the transition are in reality façade multipartism. Out of the 48 Sub-saharian countries, (including the five micro insulary states), there were five multiparty states in 1989, before the change. Out of the 43 others, 38 officially entered the race to transition. Among them, 26 went to the end of the formal process, and 12 realised a political alternative. The outcome of a political choice should not automatically be considered as a success as the case of Congo demonstrates. The absence of choice casts at least a doubt on the conditions of the victory of the incumbent. In many cases, as with Biya in Cameroon, Moi in Kenya, Bongo in Gabon, Eyadama in Togo, there is no doubt whatsoever! Ten other cases are striking failures, either stillborn transitions, as in Burundi or Nigeria, or aborted ones like in Rwanda, Chad and Zaïre. We should add four transitions which are not yet completed. The overall impression is a partial success or a relative failure, depending on the expectations.

The functioning of the multiparty regimes since the transition has been ambiguous to say the least. First, there were three post-transition coups: in Gambia, one of the five pre-transition multiparty systems, and in Sao Tomé, Comores, and more recently Niger. In other cases, behind a façade multipartism, authoritarianism has largely been restored. In fact, it had not really disappeared : this is the case of Togo, Zaïre, Kenya or Cameroon. As for the more authentic multiparty regimes like

⁸ See Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa, Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*, to be published in 1997 in Cambridge University Press. See also J-F Médard, *Les démocratisations africaines*, paper to be published by the University of Lille (ULST).

Madagascar, Benin, Mali, Niger, etc..., the governments have great difficulty facing the economic and financial situation, in dealing with the separatist movements, (Mali and Niger and the Targui), or with the opposition (Zambia). They don't always resist the temptation to use the same methods they suffered when they were in the opposition. Corruption has not disappeared. It is more visible than in authoritarian regimes because of the relative freedom of the press, but it is more shocking because of the contradiction between corruption and the democratic principles. If then, we try to assess the functioning of the new multiparty states, it is clear that there is still a long way to go before the institutionalization of democracy, and that the conditions for their stabilization are far from being fulfilled.

These weaknesses are not surprising and could be expected. They do not mean that there has been no political progress in a good number of the countries. There is first of all much more freedom of expression than there used to be, even when the government systematically violates the laws as in Cameroon. A kind of chaotic, conflictual and sometimes violent political life has emerged which does not correspond to democratic life, but not to the former dictatorship either. In most of the cases, we are facing a kind of mixture of democracy and dictatorship (democratura). This is quite unsatisfying, but still better than the former situation. What makes things look worse, however, is the discrepancy between the democratic norms and practices and the overall situation, with, in addition, a lack of improvement of the economy. What makes things worse however, is the increasing ethnicization of political life.

The main problem is that it is almost impossible to set up a democracy in societies enduring such a deep economic crisis. Democracy could in some ways help economic recovery, but the economic situation is a formidable obstacle to democracy. In times of scarcity, the competition for resources becomes stronger, and the peaceful regulation of conflicts which is at the heart of the democratic process, becomes more difficult to manage. In this context, the political entrepreneurs, and among them in the first place, the incumbent leaders, do not resist playing the ethnic card. Political leaders such as Moi in Kenya and Biya in Cameroon, deliberately fomented ethnic conflicts for the benefit of their own personal political survival. In most of the African

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countries, this has resulted in the tragic politicization of ethnicity which, in some cases, threatens the life of large parts of the population and the very survival of the political community itself. Ethnicity becomes a major problem even in countries where it was not so important as in Niger.

In other cases, it is the politicization of religion which threatens to disrupt the democratic process. For the first time, religion was a political issue in the last presidential elections in the Ivory Coast. At the heart of the modern democratic system, you find the majority principle. The idea is that the party which gains the majority of the votes controls the government (the winner takes it all). This supposes that the majority respects the minority and vice versa, and that both camps respect the rules of the game. It also means that, if the winner takes all the positions in the government, he does not take all the positions of power and all the different resources. A generalized spoils system goes against the idea of compromise which is at the root of democratic government and political choice. This compromise is not possible if the parties are communalist parties, like ethnic or religious parties, that is parties who question the political community itself and represent their own political community. This is unfortunately the case of most parties in Africa, and it makes compromises extremely difficult to reach and fragile to maintain. In the absence of a consensus on the rules of the game, of an agreement on the equitable sharing of resources, and fundamentally, in the absence of trust, there is only space for domination based on naked violence, or segregation, and in the end for ethnic or religious cleansing. The democratic procedures which seem to be the only means to limit ethnic conflicts, find their main obstacles precisely in communalists conflicts. Even worse, in that kind of situation, elections seems to exacerbate ethnic conflicts. Prior to the question of the democratization of the state, the question of its survival and of the construction of some kind of political order must be raised.

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The Survival and the Consolidation of the State : The Construction of a Political Order

There has been a fundamental ambiguity in the World Bank and FMI inspired policy. Do they want the state to disappear in order to make space for the market, because the state is bad and the market is good, or do they want to consolidate the state in Africa, because without good governance there is no possibility for economic development. There is a real problem with this overall strategy against the state as such and with this systematic deregulation which is creating a worldwide destruction of the social fabric. We need the pressure of competition, but not to the point of creating immense areas of social and economic chaos. That does not mean that we have to come back to the previous situation of the "Big State". It means that there must be a systematic search for a delicate balance between the state and the market. On one hand, we have to be much more aware than we were previously of the perverse effects of supposedly "good" policies, inspired by the legitimate search for social welfare and social justice. The state must not be the alpha and omega anymore. On the other hand there is a need for a state. In the name of an extremist utilitarian philosophy, everything is sacrificed on the altar of economic productivism. This leads to the ruin of our natural environment, and to the destruction of all social ties and solidarity. You cannot build a society on market alone. There is a need for a state, first of all in order for the market to function. Historically, the state and the market developed in strong interaction. There is a need for a state, also, to maintain a minimum of equity and solidarity at least for reasons of societal survival. In some cases, there can even exist reasonable statist economic policies : there are plenty of examples in history of successful statist economic policies. What is the most dangerous is the dogmatism of this ideology. There is an urgent need to reinvent pragmatism and come back to Reason. The priority is not to get rid of the state, but to make it more effective. This supposes that the state should not be in charge of what it cannot manage, but that the process of reform of the state must be conducted in a way that does not destroy the state in an effort to improve it.

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This is even more true for Africa. The priority for Africa is no longer development, but survival. In many areas of Africa the process of "destatization" has gone so far that one cannot speak of a state anymore. Not only have the patrimonialized institutions practically disappeared - and we see then that they were better than nothing - but the center, or what remains of it, does not control its territory anymore. The process of deterritorialization of the state is well advanced in many countries. From these geographic areas, all sorts of evils can develop, as trafficking in drugs and other things. A new division of labour is spreading where the only resource which will be left to African states, will be their capacity of bringing about harm to the other countries (*capacité de nuisance* -D. Bach). The first question is then how to bring back a minimum of political order in regions like Zaïre for instance? The second question is how to prevent the situation in many other African countries from becoming worse ? And for the few African countries which still survive, how can the state be consolidated ? This raises the question of the economic basis of the state. We are facing here a kind of vicious circle : to consolidate the state, there is the need to build a strong economic basis to solve the financial crisis. But how is it possible to reinforce the economy with this kind of dilapidated state ? This raises another question : what can be done with communalism and particularly with ethnicity? How can the perverse effects of ethnicity on democracy be avoided and those of democracy on ethnicity?

Is federalism the solution as some think? There is no general answer to that question. The size of the country has to be taken into account : it would be ridiculous to create a federal state in a country of very small dimension. On the other hand, if the people cannot live together, it is better that they live separately. The problem, as D. Bach has shown for Nigeria, is a danger of scissiparity⁹, a never ending process, that is a continuous division and subdivision of the territorial units which lead to the multiplication of the number of the federal states and of the local governments. It is true that in the case of Nigeria, what is at stake is the sharing of the oil rent. Most of the time, when a secessionist movement appears, there is an economic reason behind it. In view of the increasing division

⁹ Daniel Bach, *Unité nationale et société plurielle au Nigéria: les mécanismes boomerang du fédéralisme*, *Afrique contemporaine*, no 150, 1989.

between francophone and anglophone Cameroon, it is clear that the explanation is more economic than purely cultural. It is interesting to note that the West Cameroonians consider that the oil is not Nigerian or Cameroonian, but their own. If they ever succeeded in going back to federalism, or becoming independent, a rift between the present South West province where the oil fields are located and the North West province would start growing. To return to the precolonial territorial divisions, would be impossible since former ethnic groups have disappeared, others have been born, and the notion of territory does not have the same meaning in a traditional tribal society as in a statist society. The redrawing of African boundaries is a myth in the sense that it is totally unrealistic; but myths do have influence on history.

In any case there is a need, for most African states, because of the difficulty of instituting majority rule and political choice, to invent some kind of power sharing device more or less inspired from the consociationalist model. Consociationalism is not an ideal solution: it freezes the functioning of political institutions; this can, after a while, lead to serious political crisis as in Lebanon and in Belgium. It is, however, better than nothing as long as it functions more or less. It works as a kind of imperfect approximation of the democratic compromise. It could be a way in some countries of creating a new kind of political order with at least a minimum of rule of law and of freedom.

The effort to depatrimonialize the state has to be pursued, but with the precaution that the remedy should not be worse than the illness. The recourse to some sort of clientism and patronage seems difficult to avoid in the present situation. But the level of economic corruption should not go beyond the level wherein it becomes pure predation, that is corruption without redistribution, where corruption is only extortion. "Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien", as we say in French. The problem of corruption should be tackled very seriously first of all at the international level. This would be a precondition for going further at the national level. This must not be an excuse for laxism, but a kind of precaution against the perverse effects of our actions.

The effort to democratize the state has to be continued, here also in a flexible way. It is interesting to note that democratic conditionality was, until recently, not imposed on Uganda. After

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what has happened to Uganda, this was wise, even though we may not be totally convinced by the political experiment which is going on¹⁰. What has to be avoided in any case is civil war. Once started, it creates an extremely difficult situation to control, as we see with Rwanda and Burundi and other countries. But then, how is it possible to deal with such harmful leaders as Eyadema, Mobutu, Biya or Moi, who prefer and are ready to create chaos rather than to leave power?

To conclude, it seems to me, in opposition to the more extreme neo-liberal, populist and culturalist views, that there is no other viable alternative : the state must be consolidated. The present process of desintegration of the state can only bring social, economic and political chaos. How to do it is less clear. The consolidation of the state implies both a relative depatrimonialization and democratization of the state, in order to make it more efficient and accountable to the society. There are no general ready made recipes to attain this goal. Reasoning in a general way as I have been doing until now should only be a starting point. Even though all these countries belong to Africa, each one of them has its singularity, with its own political trajectory and history. There has been increasing historical differentiation between African societies. If we want to think about the role of the state, it has to start from the situation of each individual state. There are no general rules, even if we can broadly agree to the same goals and strategies.

¹⁰ Richard Banegas, *La construction d'un ordre politique en Ouganda, Afrique Politique*, 1996.